



U.S. virus cases, hospitalizations continue steady decline

By LEAH WILLINGHAM and JONATHAN MATTISE
Associated Press

Average daily COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are continuing to fall in the U.S., an indicator that the omicron variant's hold is weakening across the country.

Total confirmed cases reported Saturday barely exceeded 100,000, a sharp downturn from around 800,850 five weeks ago on Jan. 16, according to Johns Hopkins University data. In New York, the number of cases went down by more than 50% over the last two weeks.

"I think what's influencing the decline, of course, is that omicron is starting to run out of people to infect," said Dr. Thomas Russo, professor and infectious disease chief at the

University of Buffalo's Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.

COVID-19 hospitalizations are down from a national seven-day average of 146,534 on Jan. 20 to 80,185 the week ending in Feb 13, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID data tracker. Public health experts say they are feeling hopeful that more declines are ahead and that the country is shifting from being in a pandemic to an 'endemic' that is more consistent and predictable. However, many expressed concern that vaccine uptick in the U.S. has still been below expectations, concerns that are exacerbated by the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

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Customers wearing face masks to protect against the spread of the coronavirus shop at the Reading Terminal Market in Philadelphia, Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2022.

Associated Press

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U.S. virus cases, hospitalizations continue steady decline

Continued from Front

Dr. William Schaffner of Vanderbilt University's School of Medicine said Sunday that the downturn in case numbers and hospitalizations is encouraging. He agreed that it likely has a lot to do with herd immunity.

"There are two sides to omicron's coin," he said. "The bad thing is that it can spread to a lot of people and make them mildly ill. The good thing is it can spread to a lot of people and make them mildly ill, because in doing so, it has created a lot of natural immunity." However, Schaffner said it's much too early to "raise the banner of mission accomplished." As a public health expert, he said he'll be more

comfortable if the decline sustains itself for another month or two.

"If I have a concern, it's that taking off the interventions, the restrictions, may be happening with a bit more enthusiasm and speed than makes me comfortable," he said. "My own little adage is, better to wear the mask for a month too long, than to take the mask off a month too soon and all of a sudden get another surge."

Officials in many states are cutting back on restrictions, saying they are moving away from treating the coronavirus pandemic as a public health crisis and instead shifting to policy focused on prevention. During a Friday news conference, Utah Gov. Spencer Cox



A man walks underneath the marquee of the Alex Theatre in Glendale, Calif., which bears a message urging people to get COVID-19 vaccine booster shots, Monday, Jan. 24, 2022.

Associated Press

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announced that the state would be transitioning into what he called a "steady state" model starting in April in which Utah will close mass testing sites, report COVID-19 case counts on a more infrequent basis and advise residents to make personal choices to manage the risk of contracting the virus.

"Now, let me be clear, this is not the end of COVID, but it is the end — or rather the beginning — of treating COVID as we do other seasonal respiratory viruses," the Republican said.

Also on Friday, Boston lifted the city's proof of vaccine policy, which required patrons and staff of indoor spaces to show proof of vaccination.

"This news highlights the progress we've made in our fight against Covid-19 thanks to vaccines & boosters," Boston Mayor Michelle Wu said via Twitter.

Dr. Amy Gordon Bono, a Nashville primary care physician, said now is not the time to lessen vaccination efforts, but to double down on them. In the spring of 2021 when vaccines were becoming more readily available, the U.S. was "eager to declare COVID independence," she said. Then came the delta and omicron surges.

Bono, who attended medical school at Tulane University

in New Orleans, said the U.S. should approach COVID like hurricane season.

"You have to learn to live with COVID and you have to learn from it," she said.

One challenge is that each region has a unique landscape, she said. In the American South, for example, many restrictions have been lifted for a while or never existed in the first place. Yet it's also a region with relatively lower vaccination rates.

"We've suffered so much and if there's a way to help appease future suffering, it's having a more vaccinated community," she said.

In Buffalo, Russo said he sees two possible future outcomes. In one, the U.S. experiences a fairly quiet spring and summer while immunity is still strong. He said in that scenario, it's likely immunity will wane and there will be a bump of new cases in the cooler months during flu season, but hopefully not a severe surge.

"Whether such a variant can evolve is the big question, right?" he said. "That is the concern that we'll have to see through. Omicron was the first version of that, and there is this sort of adage that 'well, over time, viruses evolve to be less virulent,' but that's not really true. Viruses evolve to be able to infect us." □

White House spending targets social justice; criteria vague

By **FELICIA FONSECA** and
MICHAEL PHILLIS
Associated Press

WINSLOW, Ariz. (AP) — This once-bustling city in northern Arizona has a troubled relationship with rain. Winslow needs it, but just a little can overwhelm a levee system that officials have pleaded with the federal government for years to fix. Local officials believe a push from the Biden administration to fund projects that help disadvantaged communities gave them an edge this year. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently announced \$65 million is going to Winslow's flood control project.

"Until they were able to introduce criteria that recognized other social effects and socioeconomic level of communities and environmental impacts, it was just a numbers game," Navajo County Public Works Director John Osgood said. "And until you could reach a certain level, you weren't going to be competitive, you weren't going to receive funding."

President Joe Biden promised last year that 40% of the benefits of federal investments in areas such as climate change that can increase flood risk would flow to disadvantaged communities, including those with high rates of poverty and unemployment. The White House calls the effort Justice40.

The Biden administration recently announced \$14 billion in spending on environmental restoration and infrastructure projects like the one in Winslow, where most residents are Native American or Hispanic, the median household income is less than \$38,000 a year and a quarter of residents live in poverty. They say the spending is in line with Justice40 but have not detailed how.

That's because some of the rules for Justice40 are still being written, raising concerns about how the administration is carrying out the policy and whether it's being applied in a way that fulfills its promise. Even Winslow and the broader



Tourists pose for photos on Feb. 4, 2022 on the corner in Winslow, Arizona, made famous in the Eagles' song, "Take it Easy," with the line "Standin' on a corner in Winslow, Arizona."

Associated Press

Navajo County don't know how the math works out.

"There has to be accountability where we look back and say, 'How well did we meet this objective?'" said Natalie Snider of the Environmental Defense Fund. Two-thirds of Winslow — including a hospital, nursing homes, schools and utilities — is in a flood plain after the Federal Emergency Management Agency decertified a levee in 2008. A massive flood could affect an Interstate 40 bridge and a rail line over the Little Colorado River that carries \$35 billion in cargo destined for the West Coast.

And the corner off Route 66 made famous in the Eagles song "Take it Easy," with the line "Standin' on a corner in Winslow, Arizona," would look more like a stream than a sidewalk in a flood, the city said.

Historically, environmental justice has been used during federal project reviews to consider the potential harm to a disadvantaged community. Biden's executive order on Justice40 directs federal agencies to think about how their decisions and spending can benefit communities that have been ignored.

Typically, the Army Corps considers factors such as preventing property damage and job creation when it weighs the benefits and costs of projects. In the

infrastructure bill, Congress said proposals that benefit disadvantaged communities should be prioritized for some projects in areas like flood mitigation.

The Army Corps' \$14 billion in funding includes the levee project in Winslow, the restoration of native riparian habitat in New Mexico's Espanola Valley that is heavily Hispanic and Native American and work on a tidal channel through San Juan, Puerto Rico, that is clogged with waste and debris.

Estrella D. Santiago Pérez, an environmental affairs manager for a group that has long pushed for the Puerto Rico dredging project, said the \$163 million in federal funding will help improve the health of the San Juan Bay Estuary. It also will enhance living conditions for residents near the Martín Peña Channel who suffer when frequent flooding sends sewage-infested water into their homes. Some residents must relocate.

What's less clear is how much of a factor social, environmental or economic justice plays in funding decisions. The Office of Management and Budget released interim guidance to federal agencies last July and said a final version is in the works.

On Friday, the Biden administration released a preliminary tool that identifies

disadvantaged communities that should benefit from Justice40. That tool, which considers factors like the poverty rate and a community's susceptibility to climate change, identifies Winslow as a disadvantaged community. It does not include race as a factor. Officials say it was designed to withstand a potential court challenge.

The Biden administration is still developing scorecards to track how well agencies are carrying out Justice40. "Until that happens, we won't be able to judge the Biden-Harris administration," said Kyle Whyte, a University of Michigan professor who is on the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council.

Rural counties such as Navajo and Santa Cruz in California have pushed for years for social justice to be more of a factor in funding from the Army Corps so that projects from disadvantaged communities would be more competitive.

"It's not fully baked into the calculus yet," said Mark Strudley, the flood control manager in Santa Cruz County.

Strudley cited a largely migrant labor force, a significant Spanish-speaking population and a growing poverty rate as reasons the federal government should fund a flood control project near the Pajaro River.

The project in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties got a boost last year when the state decided to fund the full non-federal cost, but it wasn't among the Army Corps' most recent funding recipients.


Local officials also have said that poor, small and rural communities struggle without the resources they need for studies.

"The communities that you want to help the most are the communities that have the least capacity to compete for the money," said Colin Wellenkamp, executive director of the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative.

Even with funding granted, local sponsors sometimes must scramble to fulfill the cost share.

In Arizona, Navajo County and Winslow must come up with 35% of the cost for design and construction of the levee project, which is \$35 million. The city has some money in savings and is exploring other options but doesn't want to impose additional taxes on residents, City Manager John Barkley said.


The decertification of the Winslow levee that runs several miles alongside the Little Colorado River forced some residents to buy flood insurance. Data from FEMA showed the Winslow ZIP code has more than 250 active policies. □



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U.S. defense chief: Russia 'uncoiling and poised to strike'

By LIUDAS DAPKUS

Associated Press

VILNIUS, Lithuania (AP) —

U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin assured the three Baltic nations Saturday that they would not be on their own if faced with security threats from Russia, but he stopped short of promising a permanent deployment of American troops in the former Soviet republics.

Austin was in Lithuania as a massive Russian troop buildup and other actions have Western officials saying that Moscow could invade Ukraine at any time, although Russia has denied planning an invasion.

"They are uncoiling and are now poised to strike," Austin said Saturday about the readiness of Russia's troops to attack Ukraine.

Lithuanian officials voiced concerns that Russian President Vladimir Putin's alleged ambitions could expand to the entire region.

"The battle for Ukraine is a battle for Europe. If Putin is not stopped there, he will go further," Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said during a joint news conference with Austin. "They are choosing the way that is based on force. We need to send a very clear and unambiguous message that it would be faced by a very clear



From left, U.S. Secretary for Defense Lloyd J. Austin III, Estonia's Minister of Defence Kalle Laanet, Latvia's Minister of Defense Artis Pabriks, and Lithuania's Minister of Foreign Affairs Gabrielius Landsbergis, acting Minister of National Defense, pose for photographers during a meeting at the Defense Ministry in Vilnius, Lithuania, Saturday, Feb. 19, 2022.

Associated Press

and swift response."

In an interview with The Associated Press on Saturday, Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Simonyte noted that some European political leaders a few years ago spoke of NATO being "irrelevant."

"Putin must be surprised now by the unity of the West, which is much stronger than ever," Simonyte told The AP. "Now we see how relevant NATO is and how important it is that we have absolute unity of

NATO and the European Union. And the most important message to Mr. Putin is that there will be no decisions on countries behind the countries' back. This is what he wants to achieve." She scolded Western nations for not taking signals coming from Moscow seriously enough in the past years. Moscow annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and began backing separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine, including the Donbas region, that same year.

"If the threat from Russia would have been taken seriously by the West, there would have been no Crimea and no Donbas. A lot in the future will depend on how strong the Western reaction will be if Russia invades Ukraine," Simonyte said. "Bad peace is better than a good war. Diplomacy should be given a chance, but there will be no trust (in Russia) anymore and I do not see how it can be restored."

The three Baltic nations —

Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia — joined NATO on the same day in March 2004, and the alliance operates under the principle that an attack on one member is an attack on them all. Lithuania, a nation of 2.8 million, borders Russian ally Belarus and Russia's Kaliningrad exclave.

"I want everyone in Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia to know — and I want President Putin and the Kremlin to know — that the United States of America stands with our allies," Austin said during the news conference in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital.

Austin also met with Simonyte, Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda and the defense ministers of Latvia and Estonia on his two-day visit to Lithuania.

Nauseda asked Washington for a permanent deployment of a rotating battalion in the Baltics, emphasizing that the situation in Eastern Europe continues to deteriorate.

"Russia's military buildup on NATO's eastern border changes the overall security situation. Therefore, the decision to reinforce security in the region with additional troops from the United States and to accelerate collaboration on military acquisitions is critical," Nauseda said. □



Portland police respond, on Saturday, Feb. 19, 2022, to a shooting in the area of Normandale Park in Northeast Portland, Ore.

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) —

One person was killed and five others were wounded in a shooting Saturday night at a Portland park where a march was planned to protest police violence.

Officers responding to a report of shots fired at Normandale Park found one woman dead, according to the Portland Police Bureau. Two men and three other women were taken

Police: 1 killed, 5 hurt in park shooting in Portland

to the hospital.

Their conditions have not been released, and police have not named anyone involved in the shooting.

Social media flyers show that at the same time as the shooting, a march was planned for Amir Locke, a Black man who was fatally shot by police in Minneapolis, KOIN-TV reported.

Portland, Oregon's largest city, saw months of nightly protests in 2020 that often spiraled into violence following the murder by police of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Portland became the center of the movement to defund the police,

but the sustained protests in the city have largely faded away.

The city is now dealing with a plague of gun violence. Police responded to six shootings within a nine-hour span between Thursday night and early Friday. Shortly before Saturday night's shooting at Normandale Park, police who were called to a separate disturbance were involved in a shooting that left one person dead. It wasn't immediately clear if the person died by police gunfire. Although last year was marked by record-high numbers of gun violence

in Portland, the number of shooting incidents during the first month of 2022 outpaced January 2021, according to police data. During January alone, police recorded 127 shootings.

Police and city officials say the increase in violence, which disproportionately affected Portland's Black community, was fueled by gang-related arguments, drug deals gone wrong and disputes among homeless people. The situation was exacerbated by the pandemic, economic hardships and mental health crises. □

Canada's protests settle down, but could echo in politics

By ROB GILLIES and
TIM SULLIVAN

Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — The streets around the Canadian Parliament are quiet now. The Ottawa protesters who vowed never to give up are largely gone, chased away by policemen in riot gear. The relentless blare of truckers' horns has gone silent.

But the trucker protest, which grew until it closed a handful of Canada-U.S. border posts and shut down key parts of the capital city for weeks, could echo for years in Canadian politics and perhaps south of the border.

The protest, which was first aimed at a COVID-19 vaccine mandate for cross-border truckers but also encompassed fury over the range of COVID-19 restrictions and hatred of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, reflected the spread of disinformation in Canada and simmering populist and right-wing anger.

"I think we've started something here," said Mark Suitor, a 33-year-old protester from Hamilton, Ontario, speaking as police retook control of the streets around Parliament. Protesters had essentially occupied those streets for more than three weeks, embarrassing Trudeau and energizing Canada's far right. Suitor believes the protests will divide the country, something he welcomes.

"This is going to be a very big division in our country," he said. "I don't believe this is the end."

While most analysts doubt the protests will mark a historic watershed in Canadian politics, it has shaken both of Canada's two major parties.

"The protest has given both the Liberals and the Conservatives a black eye," said Nelson Wiseman, a political science professor at the University of Toronto. Trudeau's Liberals look bad for allowing protesters to foment weeks of chaos in the capital city, he said, while the Conservatives look bad for championing protesters, many of them



An officer stands next to police vehicles are parked downtown Ottawa on Sunday, Feb. 20, 2022. Associated Press

from the farthest fringes of the right.

The conservatives "have to be careful not to alienate more moderate voters, who are generally not sympathetic to the protesters or right-wing populism more generally," said Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal.

The self-styled Freedom Convoy shook Canada's reputation for civility, inspired convoys in France, New Zealand and the Netherlands and interrupted trade, causing economic damage on both sides of the border. Hundreds of trucks eventually occupied the streets around Parliament, a display that was part protest and part carnival.

Authorities moved quickly to reopen the border posts, but police in Ottawa did little but issue warnings until the past couple days, even as hundreds and sometimes thousands of protesters clogged the streets of the city and besieged Parliament Hill.

Truckers ignored warnings that they were risking arrest and could have their rigs seized and bank accounts frozen under the new emergency powers invoked by Trudeau. The truckers, parked on the streets in and around Parliament, blared their horns

in defiance of a court injunction against honking, issued after residents said the constant noise was making the neighborhood unlivable.

"It's high time that these

illegal and dangerous activities stop," Trudeau declared in Parliament a few days ago, speaking just a few hundred meters from the protests.

On Friday, authorities

launched the largest police operation in Canadian history, arresting a string of Ottawa protesters and increasing that pressure on Saturday until the streets in front of Parliament were clear. Eventually, police arrested at least 191 people and towed away 57 vehicles. Many protesters retreated as the pressure increased.

The Ottawa protests - the movement's last major stronghold - appeared to be largely over by Sunday morning. Fencing and police checkpoints remained. As it did in the United States, COVID-19 quickly became a political issue in Canada. Coronavirus health restrictions became a political cudgel for Canada's far right, which accused Trudeau of authoritarianism. But while the restrictions clearly benefitted the far-right People's Party of Canada, things are more complicated in the Conservative Party. □



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Israeli PM: Iran nuke deal will bring 'more violent' Mideast

By JOSEF FEDERMAN

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's prime minister on Sunday criticized an emerging deal over Iran's nuclear program, saying it would be weaker than a previous agreement and would create a "more violent, more volatile Middle East."

World powers have been negotiating in Vienna in a bid to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, which was left in tatters after the Trump administration, goaded by Israel, withdrew.

The original deal granted Iran relief from crippling economic sanctions in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. Israel vehemently opposed that accord and has urged negotiators to take a hard line against Iran in the current round of talks.

In a speech to Jewish American leaders Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett warned that Iran has used the interim period to march ahead with its enrichment of uranium to levels approaching weapons grade.

He also noted the 10-year limits on enrichment and other key aspects of Iran's nuclear program in the original deal are set to be lifted in 2025 — just two and a half years from now.

That "leaves Iran with a fast track to military-grade en-



Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett chairs the weekly cabinet meeting in Jerusalem, Sunday, Feb. 20, 2022.

richment," Bennett told the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

In the meantime, he said that lifting sanctions right away will deliver billions of dollars to Iran to spend on hostile proxy groups along Israel's borders.

"For Israel and all the stability-seeking forces in the Middle East — the emerging deal as it seems is highly likely to create a more violent, more volatile Middle East," he said.

He repeated his pledge that Israel will not allow Iran to become a threshold

state and said Israel would not be bound by a new deal. "We have a clear and un-negotiable red line: Israel will always maintain its freedom of action to defend itself," he said. Bennett delivered a similar message earlier in the day during the weekly meeting of his Cabinet.

Israel considers Iran to be its greatest enemy. It strongly opposed the 2015 deal and has watched with trepidation as the current talks have carried on.

It says it wants an improved deal that places tighter restrictions on Iran's nuclear

program and addresses Iran's long-range missile program and its support for hostile proxies along Israel's borders, like the Lebanese militant Hezbollah.

Israel also insisted that the negotiations must be accompanied by a "credible" military threat to ensure that Iran does not delay indefinitely.

Under the strong encouragement of former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Donald Trump withdrew from the original deal in 2018, causing it to unravel. Since then, Iran has stepped up its

nuclear activities -- amassing a stockpile of highly enriched uranium that goes well beyond the bounds of the accord.

Despite Israel's support for Trump's withdrawal, prominent voices in the country have said in retrospect that the move was a blunder.

In Iran, meanwhile, the Iranian parliament's news agency, ICANA, reported that 250 lawmakers in a statement urged President Ebrahim Raisi and his negotiating team to obtain guarantees from the U.S. and the three other European countries that they won't withdraw from the deal after it is renegotiated. Iran's hard-line dominated parliament has the power to approve or reject any proposed agreement between Iran and the other parties in Vienna.

The United States has participated in the current talks indirectly because of its withdrawal from the original deal. President Joe Biden has signaled that he wants to rejoin the deal.

Under Trump, the U.S. re-imposed heavy sanctions on the Islamic Republic. Tehran has responded by increasing the purity and amounts of uranium it enriches and stockpiles, in breach of the accord — formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA. □



A survivor from the still burning Euroferry Olympia is escorted by Greek Coast guards as he arrives at the port of Corfu island, northwestern Greece, on Sunday, Feb. 20, 2022.

Associated Press

By DEMETRIS NELLAS

Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Greek emergency workers rescued a Belarussian truck

driver Sunday from a burning ferry off the island of Corfu and found the body of a Greek truck driver as they combed the wreck-

Survivor and body found on burning ferry off Greek island

age for missing passengers. The discoveries left 10 people still unaccounted for.

The survivor, 21, was able to make his way up to the left rear deck on his own, and told rescue workers he heard other voices below.

"The fact that this man succeeded, despite adverse conditions, to exit into the deck and alert the coast guard ... gives us hope that there may be other (survivors)," coast guard spokesman Nikos Alexiou told state broadcaster ERT.

The victim was identified as a 58-year-old Greek truck driver by his family.

The Italian-owned Euroferry Olympia, which was carrying more than 290 passengers and crew as well as 153 trucks and 32 cars, caught fire Friday, three hours after it left the northwestern Greek port of Igoumenitsa bound for Brindisi in Italy. The company that operates the ferry said the fire started in a hold where vehicles were parked.

The ferry has been towed to the port of Kassiope, in northeastern Corfu. Firefighters were still battling the blaze in spots Sunday and a thick smoke still blanketed the ship.

Alexiou said his understanding was that the truck driver hadn't heard any voices just before making his way onto the deck but added "the situation is evolving."

The survivor was taken to a hospital for a medical exam. The extreme heat in some parts of the ship has impeded the Greek fire service's Disaster Management Unit and a team of private rescuers from searching the whole ship. The ferry is slightly listing from the tons of water poured into it to douse the fire but authorities say it's not in danger of capsizing. □





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Locals fret as Colombia to declare hippos invasive species

By **MARKO ÁLVAREZ** and **ASTRID SUÁREZ**

Associated Press

PUERTO TRIUNFO, Colombia

(AP) — Álvaro Molina has had his run-ins with the burly bunch of neighbors with disreputable contacts who showed up about a decade ago along the river in front of his house in Colombia's Antioquia province. But he's learned to live with them and says he is worried about a government plan he fears could harm them. People around Puerto Triunfo have grown accustomed to the herd of hippopotamuses descended from a few that were imported illegally from Africa in the 1980s by flamboyant drug lord Pablo Escobar, whose former ranch is nearby.

Molina, 57, says he supports the hippos even though he is one of the few Colombians to have been attacked by one. He was out fishing one day when he felt a movement beneath his canoe that spilled him into the water.

"The female attacked me once — the first pair that arrived — because she had recently given birth," he said.

Within weeks, Colombia's government plans to sign a document declaring the hippos an exotic invasive species, according to Environment Minister Carlos Eduardo Correa. This means coming up with a plan for how to control their population, which has reached



A hippo swims in the Magdalena river in Puerto Triunfo, Colombia, Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2022.

Associated Press

130 and is projected hit 400 in eight years if nothing is done as they flourish in Colombia's rivers.

Correa said many strategies are being discussed but no decisions have been made. Local communities will be consulted about any plan to control the hippos' population, he added.

"They talk of castration, sterilization, taking the life of some hippopotamuses," he said. "What is important is the scientific and technical rigor with which the decisions are made."

Most people interviewed in Puerto Triunfo, some 200 kilometers (120 miles) of the capital, Bogota, say they can get along with the hippos and many op-

pose even sterilization — let alone killing some.

"They make laws from a distance. We live with the hippopotamuses here and we have never thought of killing them," said Isabel Romero Jerez, a local conservationist. "The hippopotamuses aren't African now; they are Colombians."

Escobar's Hacienda Nápoles — and the hippos — have become a sort of local tourist attraction in the years since the kingpin was killed by police in 1993. When his ranch was abandoned the hippos survived and reproduced in local rivers and favorable climatic conditions. They began showing up around Puerto Triunfo a decade ago.

Scientists warn the hip-

pos do not have a natural predator in Colombia and are a potential problem for biodiversity since their feces change the composition of the rivers and could impact the habitat of manatees and capybaras.

An analysis by the Alexander Von Humboldt Biological Resources Research Institute said that climate change and "an increase in equatorial conditions, the ideal climate for the species" could increase the hippopotamus' dispersion across Colombia, potentially "overlapping with the geographic and ecological niches of native species, increasing the risk of possible competition for resources."

Hippopotamuses can also

cause damage to crops because they are mainly herbivores and seek food in large quantities at night.

While hippos are considered one of the most dangerous animals for humans in Africa, there have been only a few injuries recorded so far in these parts.

"I don't consider them a threat, but there are difficulties with them. In the municipality, we have had reports of three attacks on the civilian population," said Carmen Montaña, an official with Puerto Triunfo's Municipal Agricultural Technical Assistance Unit.

Locals say the hippos sometimes come out of the water and walk through the streets of the town. When that happens, traffic stops and people keep out of their way.

"The human animal is the one that invades their territory, that is why they feel threatened and attack," said Romero Jerez. "Human beings should be prudent, respectful and keep their distance."

Scientists warn that hippos are territorial and weigh up to three tons.

When the document declaring them an invasive species in Colombia is signed, hippopotamuses will join species such as the giant African snail, coqui frog, black tilapia and lionfish. The declaration will allow the government to allocate resources to control the hippo population, one of the main obstacles. □


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Test today, fly tomorrow during the holidays

PALM BEACH — MedCare's Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Centers has improved its services when it comes to turn around time for results. As of November its offering same day test results (previously it was 24 hours) on both PCR and Antigen tests.

This in part is to comply with the updated December 6, CDC requirement for travel to the United States, where all air passengers, regardless of vaccination status, must show a negative COVID-19 test taken no more than 1 day before travel to the United States.

MedCare Fit2Fly Testing Center at the Cove Mall is opposite the Holiday Inn and is open every day for walk-ins from 8 AM through 6 PM. MedCare's other location is situated at The Courtyard by Marriott Aruba Resort, is across the street from the RIU Hotel and is open every day from 8:00 AM until 2 PM. These two locations are at a stone's throw from your resort, condominium, or other vacation accommodation. Walk-ins are welcome.

MedCare Clinic, a high-quality medical clinic that specializes in urgent care for tourists and that has been appointed as the national COVID-19 clinic for tourists, and Laboratorio di Servizio, a full-service modern medical laboratory with state-of-the-art equipment, have partnered up to provide fast and reliable COVID-19 testing to all. Laboratorio di Servizio is ISO-15189:2012 accredited by the Dutch Council for Accreditation (M317).

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Schools in San Nicolas Also Have Joined The LeerOrkest Aruba Program

San Nicolas - Recently the youngsters at St. Paulus School, Graf von Zinzendorf and the S.O.A.Z.A. schools joined the LeerOrkest Aruba Program taking instruments lessons such as violin, cello, flute, French horn, bass, drums and percussion.

The kids had been waiting eagerly for these lessons and on February 3rd their happy faces were proof that their dreams were realized. The teachers also were filled with enthusiasm and some even participated in the lessons, admirably showing their support.

Currently LeerOrkest Aruba is conducting instrument classes for around 400 kids at five schools, including Colegio Laura Wernet Paskel and Prinses Amalia Basisschool. Online lessons of GME (General Music Education) continue to be given at all the schools of the S.K.O.A., D.P.S.,



S.P.C.O.A., S.O.A.Z.A., Nos Fortalesa Montessori, Traimerdia Sonrisa and the Centro di Bario Savaneta. Soon International School of Aruba also will conduct these online classes.

The LeerOrkest Aruba program became a reality thanks to the support of the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security through the LeerOrkest of Amsterdam.

It has been proven that music lessons make children happy.

If our children are happy, Aruba will be happy.

Music is for All Kids. ☐



Aruba Today launches amazing campaign



ORANJESTAD — As a token of appreciation to all our readers and followers, Aruba Today launched a Like, Share, Tag & Win Campaign which started on February 16 and will last up till April 6, 2022.

Prize:

Win a weekend stay at Caribbean Palm Village for 4 persons. Price can be redeemed from April 16th till Dec 2022.

What to do:

Step 1: Like the facebook page of Aruba Today
Step 2: Tag 2 friends in the comments box
Step 3: Share the campaign post on your timeline (public)

Winner will be announced

on **Wednesday April 6, 2022** thru our facebook page.

Remember to follow all 3 steps. Increase the odds of winning by sharing the post as much as possible.

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Birds of Aruba

On May 11th, 2010, the Aruba Birdlife Conservation was founded with the aim of protecting the biodiversity in general and birds in and around Aruba in particular.

Among other things, the foundation also focusses on increasing the survival chances of species of wild birds by promoting their preservation and conservation. The foundation publishes the most beautiful pictures of local birds on their social media that show us the beauty of Aruba's birds and nature in general. Aruba Today gives you a little peek with the following picture and description from the foundations Facebook page.

Freedom

A little girl flying with the gulls.
Manifesting her inner child.
She is one with Pachimama.
So much beauty in Aruba's wildlife.
Aruba's to protect. Aruba's to enjoy. ☐

Amazing things to know about Aruba

1. Everyone native Aruban speaks four languages; English, Spanish, Dutch and Papiamentu. Dutch and Papiamentu are the official languages of Aruba.
2. The origin of Papiamentu is still a bit of a mystery. However, Arubans say that it was developed from Portuguese-African pidgin which was used as the language for communication between slaves and slave traders. There are also some Dutch and Spanish influences.
3. In most schools in Aruba children have all their lessons in Dutch. They can only speak Papiamentu during the Papiamentu class.
4. Aruba is a former Dutch colony. It is now its own country. However, Aruba is still part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.
5. Aruba is not in Hurricane Alley, which means there's no BAD time to visit Aruba.
6. Aruba's currency is the Aruban florin which is worth about 0.56 US Dollars. Dollars are accepted everywhere though.
7. The crime rate in Aruba is pretty low. It is one of the safest islands in the Caribbean.
8. Carnival in Aruba is a BIG DEAL. It's not just Brazil! There's parades, Carnival Queen elections, dance competitions and more. So if you're in Aruba in February, make sure to attend one of the many Carnival events. Let's see if Covid will allow us to have carnival back in 2022.
9. We produce our own drinking water thanks to their desalination plant. You can drink the water straight from the taps. The electricity on the island is also a by-product of the desalinisation plant.
10. Aruba is home to a rare species of the burrowing owl. It lives in burrows in the ground hidden by cacti. It is one of Aruba's national symbols and appears on postage stamps.
11. Before Covid Aruba had over a million tourists visit its shores. That's around 10 times the local population.
12. There are over 90 different nationalities living on the island in pretty much perfect harmony
13. The Aruban flag was adopted in 1976.
14. Aruba's national day is March 18th. Just after St. Patrick's day. ☐

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Treasury brews up ideas for a more competitive beer market

By **FATIMA HUSSEIN**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government wants to give beer lovers more choices than the usual suspects when they reach for a drink — and help them pay less for whatever they choose. As part of a larger Biden administration effort to boost competition in all sorts of industries, the government is looking at ways to loosen the grip of a few big beer companies that control 65% of the market. The answers could include everything from rethinking how beers are displayed on grocery store shelves to considering whether brews can be shipped straight to doorsteps.

The Treasury Department came up with its list of suggestions earlier this month in response to a July executive order by President Joe Biden to develop a plan to improve small business access to the beer, wine and spirits industry.

The department issued a 64-page report that looks at how state alcohol laws impact competition for smaller brewers, asks the Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission to examine how mergers affect smaller companies and look at labeling rules that make it hard to comply with federal laws.

It offers mostly recommendations to a variety of actors, but several law en-



In this Oct. 1, 2018, photo, a customer looks over the beer selection at Crest Foods in Oklahoma City.

Associated Press

forcement agencies are directed in coming months to decide whether to create new federal rules on the trade.

Bob Pease, CEO of the Brewer's Association for small and independent craft brewers, says the report is a good first step, but "there is a lot of work yet to be done" to level the playing field for smaller brewers. "What's happening is that the competitive landscape has shifted," Pease said. "And antitrust enforcement is critical for the ability of smaller producers to compete."

Pease's trade group represents 5,300 U.S. brewery

members and nearly 40,000 members of the American Homebrewers Association. He says it's more and more difficult to compete as a small outfit, especially after massive mergers between big breweries, like the \$107 billion merger between Anheuser-Busch InBev and SABMiller, which needed federal government approval to close in 2016. In its recent report, Treasury looked at how big brewers, distributors and retailers potentially exclude smaller players from the market. Smaller brewers complain that distributors choose to work primarily with larger companies and retailers

slot beer in preferred locations on shelves, despite a ban on the practice.

Jim McGreevy, president of the Beer Institute, which represents the country's biggest beer makers, said the report is a "mischaracterization of the thriving American beer industry."

"Consumers are benefiting from the growing number of brewers and beer importers, with more choices for beer than at any other time in our nation's history," he said in a statement.

Beer, ale and malt beverage prices increased by about 2% last year, significantly below the overall annual inflation rate of 7%,

according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Census Bureau reported that there were 4,217 breweries in 2019, about 80% of which have fewer than 20 employees.

There's been a roughly ten-fold increase in breweries with fewer than 20 workers since 2009, a sign of the growth of independent brewing and the desire for greater access to the market.

The issue of a few companies dominating the market extends beyond beer and wine makers to the larger economy, says Matthew Weinberg, a professor at Ohio State University who studies anticompetition issues.

Weinberg, who has researched the effects of beer company mergers, found that merger agreements between large brewers can result in price increases to consumers, even though companies say that these unions lower costs for people.

"I can imagine that the most vulnerable people in our economy are the ones who are least able to avoid price increases. It has consequences for the rise in inequality we've seen in the past 40 years," Weinberg said.

Pease says his association is working on building solutions for smaller brewers where federal enforcement is lacking. □

American cuts summer flights because of delayed Boeing jets

FORT WORTH, Texas (AP)

— American Airlines is making further cuts in its international schedule for this summer because of delays in Boeing delivering new widebody planes. American said Friday that it will temporarily stop service between Seattle and London, Los Angeles and Sydney, and Dallas and Santiago, Chile.

It will also delay launching service between Dallas and Tel Aviv that was

planned for June. In addition, it will reduce flights between Miami and Sao Paulo to once daily.

The airline said it had expected to receive 13 new Boeing 787 jetliners this year, but now expects to get only 10 of them, with the rest showing up next year. American said Boeing has promised compensation. Chicago-based Boeing has been unable to deliver 787s because of production flaws including

gaps between panels of the carbon-composite fuselage.

Fort Worth-based American had hoped to operate 89% of its summer 2019 schedule in summer 2022, but scaled that back to 80% in December because it won't have enough planes. It dropped flights to Hong Kong, Edinburgh, Scotland, and Shannon, Ireland, and decided not to bring back 2010 destinations including Prague.



American Airlines passenger jets prepare for departure, on July 21, 2021, at Boston Logan International Airport in Boston.

Associated Press

Boeing has declined to say when it expects to resume shipments of 787s,

which must be approved by the Federal Aviation Administration. □

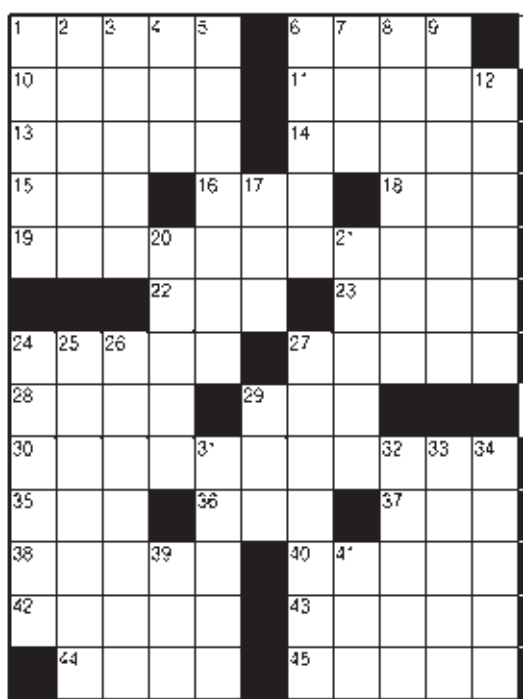
CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 42 Man of Madrid
 - 1 Backpack part
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 - 16 William McKinley's wife
 - 18 Used a chair
 - 19 43rd president
 - 22 Egg layer
 - 23 Past due
 - 24 Kayak's cousin
 - 27 King or czar
 - 28 Eager
 - 29 Knight's title
 - 30 44th president
 - 35 Tyler of "Armageddon"
 - 36 Set fire to
 - 37 — Angeles
 - 38 Fill with joy
 - 40 Downloadable read
- DOWNS**
- 1 Parsley unit
 - 2 Kid's transport
 - 3 Western contest
 - 4 Presidential nickname
 - 5 Orbital minimum
 - 6 Sipping aid
 - 7 Zodiac cat
 - 8 Odd
 - 9 Sample anew
 - 12 Tie down
 - 17 Cub's cave
 - 20 Mary's TV pal
 - 21 Book jacket
 - 24 Elevator connections
 - 25 Made use (of)
 - 26 Grunge group
 - 27 Mob makeup
 - 29 Enjoy
 - 31 Store worker
 - 32 Without aid
 - 33 Elk's kin
 - 34 Inquired
 - 39 Great weight
 - 41 Drill part



Saturday's answer



2-21

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three I's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-21 CRYPTOQUOTE

VPNUBH ZGU'V VIKU IM NU

V P N H F G K O Z I U V N O

H G W A R G Z S V I K U H V P A W I M .

— D X W A H X . B X K E N A O Z

Saturday's Cryptoquote: A FOOL MAY HAVE HIS COAT EMBROIDERED WITH GOLD, BUT IT IS A FOOL'S COAT STILL. ANTOINE RIVAROL

Ryan Michelle Bathé jumps into spotlight with 'The Endgame'

By ALICIA RANCILIO

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — We've seen her on the legal drama "All Rise" originally on CBS and "First Wives Club" for BET+, but Ryan Michelle Bathé has jumped to the top of the marquee as a star of "The Endgame" on NBC, debuting Monday. The series co-stars Morena Baccarin ("Homeland," "Deadpool," "Gotham") as Elena Federova, an international arms dealer who in the pilot has just been captured. Federova is always at least one step ahead of everyone else, so even in custody she's got the upper hand. The only person who comes close to figuring her out is Bathé's Val Turner of the FBI, a buttoned-up, by-the-book agent. Val's hit a rough patch because her estranged husband, a former federal agent, was caught taking drug money — and she turned him in. Viewers will soon notice these two characters seem to have way more going on than meets the eye, which will play out over the course of the season. That two women are the stars of this thriller series for network television is "a huge step," acknowledges Bathé. "It's not about, 'Oh, who could she seduce next?' No one's getting seduced in our show." Playing this character,



Actor Ryan Michelle Bathé poses for a portrait on Feb. 14, 2022, in Los Angeles to promote her series "The Endgame," debuting Feb. 21 on NBC.

Associated Press

says Bathé, "is very bleak in many ways because she is so isolated and so lonely and you have to feel that. From 'action' to 'cut' it's high tension and there's nothing to break it. We don't get a chance to breathe on this show, and that's what makes it good." She says she only begins to relax in bed for the night "somewhere between REM and deep sleep." Bathé is the opposite of Val: She's upbeat, animated and very relatable. She jokes that getting exercise is largely off the table lately because she would have to wake up too early. "Sometimes my pick-up time is 4:15 a.m. I'm not waking up at 2:30 to go work out. That just seems counterproductive." Production on "The End-

game" is also in New York, keeping her from her family in Los Angeles. Bathé is married to "This is Us" star Sterling K. Brown and they have two sons, Andrew and Amaré. "I miss those kiddos of mine so much, and I miss my husband, I miss my house, I miss my pillows," said Bathé. She says it took her years to like Los Angeles and she always longed to be in New York, where she attended grad school at NYU. By returning to New York, Bathé has "the thing that I said I always wanted." She has fond memories of walking around the city, but "it never occurred to me that I only did that in late spring, summer and fall. I completely blanked about the winter."

As her career ramps up with "The Endgame," Brown is winding down "This is Us," now airing its sixth and final season. She says their schedules can be tricky because their children are no longer transportable babies who can live nomadic lives with their working mom and dad. "It's all of a sudden soccer, and a fully fleshed-out human with its own friends and its own things. And there's two of them. And so now it's learning to roll with those punches and sort of figure out what's best for the family." Performing, she says, was something she knew "was an option from a very early age." □

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Huge opal sells for nearly \$144,000 at Alaska auction

Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — A gemstone, billed as one of the largest gem-quality opals in existence, was sold for \$143,750 at auction in Alaska on Sunday.

The opal, dubbed the "Americus Australis," weighs more than 11,800 carats, according to the auction house Alaska Premier Auctions & Appraisals. It also has a long history.

Most recently, it was kept in a linen closet in a home in Big Lake, north of Anchorage, by Fred von Brandt, who mines for gold in Alaska and whose family has deep roots in the gem and rock business.

The opal is larger than a brick and is broken into two pieces, which von Brandt said was a practice used decades ago to prove gem quality.

Von Brandt said the stone has been in his family since the late 1950s, when his grandfather bought it from an Australian opal dealer named John Altmann.

Von Brandt said the opal for decades was in the care of his father, Guy von Brandt, who decided it had been "locked up long enough, that it's time to put it back out in the world and see what interest it can generate." "He entrusted me to figure out which direction we wanted to go to part with the stone," von Brandt told The Associated Press.

The family, with roots in Cal-



This photo provided by Alaska Premier Auctions and Appraisals shows an opal specimen, Dec. 20, 2021.

ifornia, exhibited the stone at gem shows for years, until the early 1980s, he said. His father then branched out into furniture and displayed it at his shop. Guy von Brandt eventually moved to Oregon and kept the stone "kind of tucked away" for many years, von Brandt said.

Von Brandt said he brought it with him to Alaska over a year ago as he weighed the best approach to a possible sale. He said he went with Alaska Premier Auctions & Appraisals because he thought it would get more attention from the newer company than a larger auction house. The sale is set for Sunday.

Nick Cline, a partner and appraisal specialist with Alaska Premier Auctions & Appraisals, said the family has documentation surrounding the provenance of the opal. As part of his research, he contacted

Fiona Altmann, granddaughter of John Altmann and general manager of Altmann + Cherny in Syd-

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ney, Australia. Altmann said her grandfather, in his business dealings, made regular trips to Europe and the U.S.

Altmann said when Cline emailed her, she was skeptical; the name of the stone, in particular, threw her. But she said she started digging and discovered "something with my grandfather's handwriting with the picture of the opal with the word 'Americus Australis.'" □



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Dustin Johnson says he's sticking with the PGA Tour

By DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A proposed Saudi-financed rival golf league took a massive hit Sunday when Dustin Johnson said he was “fully committed” to the PGA Tour, and Bryson DeChambeau indicated he would stay where the stars were playing.

Johnson added his name to a growing list of golf's top players who have said they are not interested in taking guaranteed riches from the “Super Golf League” that Greg Norman and his LIV Golf Investments are behind.

Johnson, a two-time major champion who has spent more time at No. 1 in the world than any of the current players — he now is at No. 6 — had kept his intentions quiet over the last few months, leading to speculation he would join.

“I feel it is now time to put such speculation to rest. I am fully committed to the PGA Tour,” he said. “I am grateful for the opportunity to play on the best tour in the world and for all it has provided me and my family.”

Like some other players, Johnson said there are areas where the PGA Tour can “improve and evolve.” Hours later, DeChambeau posted a statement on Twitter that appeared to cool his enthusiasm.



Dustin Johnson tees off on the 17th hole during the Genesis Invitational pro-am golf event at Riviera Country Club, Wednesday, Feb. 16, 2022, in the Pacific Palisades area of Los Angeles.

Associated Press

“While there has been a lot of speculation surrounding my support for another tour, I want to make it very clear that as long as the best players in the world are playing the PGA Tour, so will I,” DeChambeau said. Each of the top eight players in the world have indicated they don’t plan to sign up for the Saudi-backed league. That doesn’t include some of golf’s other marquee players who have said they are not interested, such as Brooks Koepka and Jordan Spieth.

Rory McIlroy, Koepka and world No. 1 Jon Rahm were

among the first to reject a rival tour at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic two years ago, and they doubled down on their support this week at the Genesis Invitational, where the chatter was loud about the proposed league getting close to announcing 20 players. It picked up steam over the last two weeks because of Phil Mickelson, who is thought to be the lead player of a new league but has made comments that make it unclear what the six-time major champion actually is pursuing.

Mickelson accused the PGA Tour of “obnoxious

greed” in an interview with Golf Digest while he was at the Saudi International for a seven-figure appearance fee.

And then Alan Shipnuck, who is writing a biography on Mickelson due out this spring, published an excerpt based on a November phone interview in which Mickelson called the Saudis “scary” and referred to the PGA Tour as a “dictatorship.”

Mickelson said three players paid attorneys to write the operating agreement for a new league. He also said he didn’t care if the new league succeeded,

as long as it gave players more leverage in dealing with the PGA Tour.

Some details have been mentioned by agents who have seen the proposal, such as a schedule that includes as many as 10 events in the U.S., with the new league targeting courses owned by former President Donald Trump.

British media has reported without identifying sources that DeChambeau was offered \$130 million to join (DeChambeau took to social media to say only it was “wrong”) and Ian Poulter was offered \$30 million. Johnson was asked at the Saudi International, where he was the defending champion, whether he was offered something similar.

“No, not similar,” Johnson said to laughter, indicating it was far greater.

McIlroy, the first to reject a new league by saying he wanted to be on “the right side of history,” said this week it sounded as though the roster for a new league would be a “pre-Champions Tour” of players in the twilight of their careers.

Johnson’s announcement ends a week of top players making it clear where they stood. McIlroy referred to it as the “not so Super league.” Rahm said his “fealty” is to the PGA Tour and “I think the best legacy I can accomplish will be with the PGA Tour.” □



Andrey Rublev of Russia celebrates with the trophy after winning the men's singles final of the Open 13 Provence tennis tournament against Felix Auger-Aliassime of Canada in Marseille, south of France, Sunday, Feb. 20, 2022.

Associated Press

MARSEILLE, France (AP) — Second-seeded Andrey Rublev beat No. 3 Felix Auger-Aliassime 7-5, 7-6 (4)

to win the Open 13 tournament on Sunday, clinching his ninth career title and first for almost a year.

Rublev beats Auger-Aliassime to win Open 13 for 9th title

Since winning in Rotterdam in March last year, Rublev had lost three finals. He improved to 5-0 in indoor finals and 9-5 overall, while Auger-Aliassime dropped to 1-9 in finals.

The 21-year-old Canadian arrived in southern France in top form after beating Rublev in the semifinals and then upsetting top-seeded Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-4, 6-2 in the Rotterdam final last Sunday.

It was his first title after losing his previous eight finals.

He led 2-0 in the first set against Rublev and squandered a set point in the 12th game of the second set. “All the battles I have had with Felix since the first time back in 2018 have had drama,” the 24-year-old Rublev said. “All have had at least one set that went 7-6 and now he is one of the greatest players. Especially this season, he is on top now.”

Auger-Aliassime led the serving contest 12-9 in aces but Rublev showed again

why he is considered one of the best returners and retrievers on the tour.

He played the shot of the match in the fifth game of the first set, returning a smash close to his body and turning it into a two-handed backhand winner. “I had to increase my level otherwise I would have had no chance against Felix,” Rublev said. “I was thinking it would go to three sets. But somehow I was able to raise my level and in the end it was tough.” □

Finland beats Russians for its 1st Olympic hockey gold medal

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**

AP Hockey Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Sheets of paper rained down like super-sized confetti on the bench, which players leapt off at full speed to pile on top of goaltender Harri Sateri with such force that they knocked the net off its moorings.

After finally accomplishing what so many Finland teams before were unable to do, there was plenty of strength to go around. Finland, known as Suomi in Finnish, is now synonymous with gold.

The Finns knocked off the favored Russians 2-1 Sunday to win the men's hockey tournament without NHL players at the Beijing Games, capturing an Olympic gold medal for the first time in the nation's history. "We got what we came here for," Finland defenseman Sami Vatanen said. "We battled hard, and we got the first Olympic gold medal in Finnish ice hockey history. It's something something special, and nobody can ever take it away from us." Finland had never won at the Olympics on the men's or women's side. It last reached the final in 2006 and lost to Sweden, matching the silver from 1988. The defending champion Russians had to settle for silver instead of going back to back.

"Life doesn't end with this," coach Alexei Zhamnov told Russian TV. "There's still a lot of competitions ahead of us."

After winning gold in 2018 as the Olympic Athletes from Russia, the Russians competed this time as ROC, short for Russian Olympic Committee. The ROC and OAR names were the result of sanctions for doping and cover-ups across multiple Olympic sports.

The tournament unfolded in the shadow of another Russian doping saga, this time involving 15-year-old figure skater Kamila Valieva. Word emerged after the Russian team won gold that Valieva tested positive for a banned sub-

stance in December. She was allowed to skate in the individual event, finishing a disappointing fourth.

Players and coaches from the Russian hockey team and others at the rink faced questions about the scandal and the IOC's ruling not to hold a medal ceremony if she finished on the podium.

"On this day, we're the best country in the world in hockey," Finland forward Harri Pesonen said.

While the Russians looked like the new favorites when the NHL withdrew because of pandemic-related schedule disruptions in late December, the Finns were actually the big winners. With recent NHL players such as captain Valtteri Filppula, forward Leo Ko-

marov and defensemen Sami Vatanen and Mikko Lehtonen on the team, Finland had the firepower to go along with its hallmark of strong structure, defense and goaltending.

That combination helped Finland go through the Olympics undefeated in six games, including a three-goal comeback to beat rival Sweden in the preliminary round. Finland beat Switzerland, Slovakia and the Russians to roll through the tournament in efficient, business-like fashion with longtime coach Jukka Jalonen behind the bench. This game ended better for the Finns than the last final 16 years ago, when national stars Teemu Selanne, Kimmo Timonen, Mikko and Saku Koivu and Jere Lehtin-



Finland players celebrate after defeating Russian Olympic Committee in the men's gold medal hockey game at the 2022 Winter Olympics, Sunday, Feb. 20, 2022, in Beijing.

Associated Press

en almost got the job done. The Finnish Olympic heroes this time included Sateri, leading goal-scorer Sakari Manninen, defenseman Ville Pokka, alternate captain Marko Anttila, and

winger Hannes Bjorninen. Pokka tied it after Mikhail Grigorenko put the Russians on the board, Bjorninen redirected Anttila's shot for the winning goal and Sateri made 16 saves. □

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PALM BEACH – When you think of a restaurant that pleases the needs of a whole family or a large group of people with all different tastes? Think **Water's Edge Restaurant**. Located at the shore of Aruba's most wonderful beach, The Eagle Beach Aruba. **Water's Edge Restaurant** is guaranteed to serve you a fantastic magical night to remember. Whether you prefer to enjoy the view from indoors air conditioned comfort, outdoors in the soft tropical breeze or under a palapa with your toes in the sand. This spectacular restaurant offers the best ocean view sunset or sky full of stars dinner while the crispy Caribbean night wind caresses your face and plays with your hair.

From the minute you arrive there will be a great staff welcoming you with the most contagious smiles and warmth. The intense menu with a great variety of appetizers, main courses and delicious desserts will not disappoint. Seafood, Steaks and international favorites. All on one menu specially made just for you.

Culinary Voyage

Start your gastronomic journey with a scrumptious appetizer such as the Maryland Crab Cakes, maybe the Crispy Calamari or the mouthwatering creamy Garlic Tarragon Shrimp.

You can also opt for a classic French Onion Soup, a Lobster Bisque or the famously Water's Edge House Wedge, a crisp wedge of fresh romaine lettuce topped with homemade blue cheese dressing, diced tomatoes, chopped bacon, caramelized pecans and blue cheese crumbles, drizzled with balsamic reduction. This followed by the Chef's special of seafood such as Fresh salmon filet seasoned and grilled, topped with lemon cilantro butter and served with homemade mashed potatoes and fresh asparagus, a nice plate of Ahi Tuna or a succulent pasta dish like the Florentina Fettuccine Alfredo. Meat Lovers will have their fix with choices of a devourable 22oz. Bone-In "Tomahawk" Rib-Eye, pan seared in garlic infused oil and finished in the oven or our juicy N.Y Strip Loin, seasoned & grilled. All our steaks options are seasoned with a blend of kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper. Served with homemade mashed potatoes, seasoned vegetables and a choice of red wine reduction, green peppercorn demi glace, mushroom sauce, or bacon blue cheese butter. For extra sides the options are delectable. Fresh asparagus, seasonal vegetables, mashed or baked potatoes, fries or rice and beans. Combine your personal choice with one of the most exclusive wine from the

great selection of international wines to compliment your dish. Kids will enjoy every item of the specially compiled kids menu and there are also optional dishes for all vegans, vegetarians and gluten-free guests. To end the culinary voyage with some luscious sweetness, the desserts are wild. From a piece of coconut flan, NY cheese cake, carrot cake, chocolate brownie or our classic Tiramisu with kahlua and amaretto served with chocolate sauce and coffee jelly. Not to mention the fresh and light piece of key lime pie.

Creating memories

If you are planning a birthday dinner, here you will receive a nice bottle of champagne to take home with you to extend your experience even further whether on the beach or your own private balcony.

Live entertainment

Just about every day of the week, there is a different live entertainment by the best local artists for you to enjoy. Whether you're in a romantic mood, or more in a swinging mood, there is absolutely a night especially for you where you can combine great music with delicious cocktails mixed with concoctions. In addition, Water's Edge offers three daily Happy Hours from 12pm-1pm, 4pm-6pm and again from 9pm-10pm with all premium brands specially priced.

Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

Whether you join us for breakfast, lunch or dinner, Water's Edge Restaurant & Bar offers a relaxed and inspirational dining experience overlooking the beautiful Eagle Beach with spectacular ocean views. Gather with friends and family for drinks and appetizers or a night of pampering and relaxation.



Thank you to all our guests

From the bottom of our hearts, we would like to Thank all of our guests who showed us so much love and support all through 2021, and hopefully will continue to do so in 2022. What we are most grateful for is that we could get back to doing what we love, which is looking after our guests. So, thank you for every dinner, lunch, breakfast, very to-go order, every glass of wine, every birthday, anniversary and date-night that you spent with us this last year. To our new guests, Welcome! We hope you to see you back soon! ☐



"Water's Edge Restaurant is where magnificent beach views, amazing food and excellent service come together."

Water's Edge is open daily from 8am – 11pm

To reserve your table please call **+297 586 9494/ ext 8106** or **direct line +297 586-9494**

For more information about the menus, entertainment and hours, please visit the website watersedge-aruba.com

